



... with right samadhi, no matter what level of calm is reached, there is awareness. There is full mindfulness and clear comprehension. This is the samadhi which can give rise to wisdom! One cannot get lost in it. Practitioners should understand this well ...

THE PATH IN HARMONY

Source : A Taste of Freedom – a Collection of Talks by Ajahn Chah

The Path in Harmony

4

Today I would like to ask you all. "Are you sure yet, are you certain in your meditation practice?" I ask because these days there are many people teaching meditation, both monks and laypeople, and I'm afraid you may be subject to wavering and doubt. If we understand clearly, we will be able to make the mind peaceful and firm.

You should understand "the Eightfold Path" as morality, concentration and wisdom. The path comes together as simply this. Our practice is to make this path arise within us.

When sitting meditation we are told to close the eyes, not to look at anything else, because now we are going to look directly at the mind. When we close our eyes, our attention comes inwards. We establish our attention on the breath, center our feelings there, put our mindfulness there. When the factors of the path are in harmony we will be able to see the breath, the feelings, the mind and its mood for what they are. Here we will see the "focus point," where *samadhi* and the other factors of the Path converge in harmony.

When we are sitting in meditation, following the breath, think to yourself that now you are sitting alone. There is no one sitting around you, there is nothing at all. Develop this feeling that you are sitting alone until the mind lets go of all externals, concentrating solely on the breath. If you are thinking, "This person is sitting over here, that person is sitting over there," there is no peace,

the mind doesn't come inwards. Just cast all that aside until you feel there is no-one sitting around you, until there is nothing at all, until you have no wavering or interest in your surroundings.

Let the breath go naturally, don't force it to be short or long or whatever, just sit and watch it going in and out. When the mind lets go of all external impressions, the sounds of cars and such will not disturb you. Nothing, whether sights or sounds, will disturb you, because the mind doesn't receive them. Your attention will come together on the breath.

If the mind is confused and won't concentrate on the breath, take a full, deep breath, as deep as you can, and then let it all out till there is none left. Do this three times and then re-establish your attention. The mind will become calm.

It's natural for it to be calm for a while, and then restlessness and confusion may arise again. When this happens, concentrate, breathe deeply again, and then reestablish your attention on the breath. Just keep going like this. When this has happened many times you will become adept at it, the mind will let go of all external manifestations. External impressions will not reach the mind. *Sati* will be firmly established. As the mind becomes more refined, so does the breath. Feelings will become finer and finer, the body and mind will be light. Our attention is solely on the inner, we see the in-breaths and out-breaths clearly, we see all impressions clearly. We will see the coming together of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom. This is called the Path in harmony. When there is this harmony our mind will be free of confusion, it will come together as one. This is called *samadhi*.

After watching the breath for a long time, it may become very refined; the awareness of the breath will gradually cease, leaving only bare awareness. The breath may become so refined it disappears! Perhaps we are 'Just sitting,' as if there is no breathing at all. Actually there is breathing, but it seems as if there's none. This is because the mind has reached its most refined state, there is just bare awareness. It has gone beyond the breath. The knowledge that the breath has disappeared becomes established. What will we take as our object of meditation now? We take just this knowledge as our object, that is, the awareness that there's no breath.

Unexpected things may happen at this time; some people experience them, some don't. If they do arise, we should be firm and have strong mindfulness. Some people see that the breath has disappeared and get a fright, they're afraid they might die. Here we should know the situation just as it is. We simply notice that there's no breath and take that as our object of awareness. This, we can say, is the firmest, surest type of *samiidhi*. There is only one firm, unmoving state of mind. Perhaps the body will become so light it's as if there is no body at all. We feel like we're sitting in empty space, all seems empty. Although this may seem very unusual, you should understand that there's nothing to worry about. Firmly establish your mind like this.

When the mind is firmly unified, having no sense impressions to disturb it, one can remain in that state for any length of time. There will be no painful feelings to disturb

us. When *samadhi* has reached this level, we can leave it when we choose, but if we come out of this *samadhi* we do so comfortably, not because we've become bored with it or tired. We come out because we've had enough for now, we feel at ease, we have no problems at all.

If we can develop this type of *samadhi*, then if we sit, say, thirty minutes or an hour, the mind will be cool and calm for many days. When the mind is cool and calm like this, it is clean. Whatever we experience, the mind will take up and investigate. This is a fruit of *samadhi*.

Morality has one function, concentration has another function and Wisdom another. These factors are like a cycle. We can see them all within the peaceful mind. When the mind is calm it has collectedness and restraint because of wisdom and the energy of concentration. As it becomes more collected it becomes more refined, which in turn gives morality the strength to increase in purity. As our morality becomes purer, this will help in the development of concentration. When concentration is firmly established it helps in the arising of wisdom. Morality, concentration and wisdom help each other, they are inter-related like this. In the end the Path becomes one and functions at all times. We should look after the strength which arises from the path, because it is the strength which leads to Insight and Wisdom.